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24. COMMON MYNA AS A CAMPFOLLOWER OF LESSER WHISTLING TEALS

The Common Myna is known to follow domestic cattle, horses and wild herbivora when they graze. The grazing animals disturb insects which become easily accessible to the mynas.

One afternoon I saw a flock of 9 Lesser Whistling Teals land on the banks of the Mula—Mutha bird sanctuary and waddle into the grassy bank looking for food. A few minutes later they were joined by a few Common Mynas. Soon about 20 of them aggregated around the teals and followed them persistently down thebank for about 50 m. The next day the teals arrived at the same time, and were immediately spotted by the mynas, who seemed to appear from nowhere began following them much more closely. In fact they seemed to pick up insects from just around the feet of the teals. I saw the same pattern repeated again three times during the next couple of days.

This shows how rapidly such a bond between different species can be formed when food availability is a motivating factor.

June 6, 1987. E.K. BHARUCHA

25. TOOL– USING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIAN HOUSE CROW *CORVUS SPLENDENS*

Tool–using behaviour in birds and other animals has been described by many authors. The Woodpecker–finch *Cactospiza pallida* and the Mangrove–finch *c. heliobates* of the Galapagos islands use Cactus spines, leaf petioles, twigs, etc., for probing into holes and crevices during their food search. Recently Orenstein (1972) recorded tool–use in the New Caledonian Crow, *Corvus moneduloides.*

On 8 January 1987, we had an opportunity to observe activity related to tool–use in the Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*. At 1248 hrs we saw a House Crow on a *Manilkara hexandra* tree, just 2 m below the canopy (the total tree height is *c.* 7 m) busily engaged in an intricate behaviour. We were sitting about 10 m away from the tree. The crow perched on a small branch, plucked a leaf and immediately thrust it into a hole in one of the big branches just opposite its perch. After thrusting in the leaf it waited for about a minute, removed the leaf the hole and, holding it under its feet, pecked at some prey from the leaf and ate. It then dropped the leaf, plucked another leaf, thrust it into the hole and repeated the operation. The bird repeated this process dexterously till 1302 hrs. We recorded it performing this activity five times. Twice it dropped the leaf without picking up anything; apparently there was no prey attached to the leaf. During these observations we also noticed the crow thrusting its beak alone deep into the hole twice but without success.

When the crow left the perch, one of us immediately climbed the tree and investigated the hole to determine the food that the crow had obtained. We found a colony of ants,*Sima* sp. deep inside the hole. The depth of the hole was 12 cm. We collected nine *Manilkara hexandra* leaves from under that branch on the ground where the crow had sat. We had observed the crow using the leaf as a tool five times but the number of dropped leaves collected on the ground indicates that the process was on well before we located the crow. This repeated use of leaves by the crow to obtain prey is of a clear—cut evidence of tool—use by the crow *Corvus splendens.*

S. ALAGAR RAJAN
June 17, 1987. P. BALASUBRAMANIAN

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